Statement of Mandate 2014-2015

Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources

Report DNR 2014-02
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NOVA SCOTIA

Table of Contents

Message from the Minister and Deputy Minister 1

Department Mandate 2

Government Priorities 3

Performance Measures 6

Budget Context 8

1 Message from the Minister and Deputy Minister

The past year has been busy for the Department of Natural Resources on several fronts and we expect no less in 2014-15 as we continue to manage our valued natural resources while providing economic opportunity across the province, especially in rural areas.

Nova Scotia has experienced challenges as well as opportunities in our resource-based industries, particularly in the mining and forestry sectors. We believe our long-term success will come from being innovative and bold as we move forward.

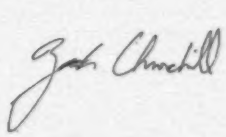
The Department of Natural Resources continues to make progress in supporting the mining sector, including the launch of NovaROC last year. This online tool helps prospectors and others in the mining sector manage their claims and mineral rights from anywhere in the world where they have Internet access.

In forestry, the province and the world are adapting to the transition of the sector. Our government has initiated a significant shift in policy in forestry sector development. Instead of large corporate handouts to specific companies, our focus is on innovation and solutions for the entire sector. By reviewing the way we manage our forests while developing new products, technologies, and processes that will make Nova Scotia more competitive in world markets, we see a brighter future. The end result will be more opportunity and more employment in rural economies, making Nova Scotia an even better place to raise a family, to build a future, and to attract new Nova Scotians to enjoy our improved economy and our way of life.

We will continue to implement plans to manage the western Crown lands - including those recently acquired - for economic development and sustainable management of biodiversity - in ways that capitalize on the region's multiple uses and reflect diverse interests.

There is also great opportunity for Nova Scotians and visitors to Nova Scotia to enjoy our provincial parks, from Yarmouth County to Aspy Bay, and from the South Shore through to the North Shore. We will continue to work according to plan, to promote and improve our provincial parks system.

Nova Scotia's traditional reliance on its natural resources for its economy, outdoor recreation, and our appreciation of wildlife and nature, is an important part of our heritage. With help from our partners and from Nova Scotians, we intend to help make it an important part of our future as well.



Honourable Zach Churchill
Minister, Natural Resources

Duff Montgomerie
Deputy Minister, Natural Resources

2 Department Mandate

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has broad responsibilities relative to the management, development, conservation and protection of Nova Scotia's biodiversity, forest, geological, and park resources and the administration of the province's Crown land. The department manages risk, complies with legislation, makes informed decisions, and promotes shared stewardship by providing information and outreach activities to help Nova Scotians.

Biodiversity and wildlife related responsibilities include supporting and promoting the conservation and the sustainable and ethical use of wildlife populations, habitats and ecosystems in Nova Scotia; collecting information and conducting research to better manage wildlife and their habitats; developing protection and recovery programs for species of conservation and their habitats; undertaking biodiversity initiatives; protecting areas of important wildlife habitats or populations; and managing risk around aggressive wildlife behaviour.

Forests related responsibilities include forest management planning and research; developing and implementing strategies that support and contribute to sustainable forests; maintaining the provincial forest inventory; producing data on the province's forest resources; monitoring primary forest production; coordinating extension programs and support for forestry sector development; and delivering programs to protect our forests from fires, pests and diseases.

Geological resources related responsibilities include implementing policies and programs that help to ensure the best use of the province's mineral, groundwater and geoheritage resources; collecting and managing geoscientific information; monitoring compliance with regulatory requirements; administering the mineral rights tenure system and mineral royalties; and promoting an understanding of geological hazards and managing the associated risks they pose to Nova Scotians.

Parks and recreation related responsibilities include planning, designing, developing and operating a system of camping and day-use parks, various trails and other outdoor recreational opportunities. The provincial parks system preserves unique and scenic landscapes, and cultural and heritage resources; and provides opportunities for outdoor recreation, an appreciation and awareness of our natural and cultural land base, community economic development and amenities for the public.

More than one third of the province's land base is administered as provincial Crown land and protected areas. The department also administers inland submerged land, and submerged lands along the province's coastline. Crown land and protected area related responsibilities include enforcement of laws and policies, management and development of resources; protection and conservation through designations and agreements; maintenance of boundaries; and management of associated risks.

The department's vision for ensuring the sustainability of the province's natural resources is described in "*The Path We Share, A Natural Resources Strategy for Nova Scotia 2011-2020*":

> *In 2020 and beyond:*
> - *Nova Scotia is rich in natural resources - including biodiversity, forests, geological resources, and provincial parks.*
> - *Individuals and groups interested in our natural resources work with the government to manage these resources wisely.*
> - *All Nova Scotians benefit from the natural health and wealth of the province.*

3 Government Priorities

Government has identified 6 priorities to guide and focus its actions. The department's initiatives, programs and services support aspects of these priorities.

The 6 priorities are:
- consumer-focused energy solutions including a regulated, competitive energy market;
- prosperous business of all sizes – creating jobs across the province;
- responsible fiscal management;
- investing in student success with a renewed and strengthened education system;
- accessible, responsive healthcare;
- helping all Nova Scotians meet their fullest potential by supporting vulnerable communities – seniors, disabled.

The department's work to meet its mandate primarily impacts four of these priorities; some examples of this work are described below.

Consumer-focused energy solutions including a regulated, competitive energy market
While the Department of Energy is the lead department on the Maritime Link project, DNR has worked closely with Energy to negotiate agreements required under the Crown Lands Act. These agreements have addressed placement of a subsea cable between Nova Scotia (NS) and Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) as well as provincial Crown land required for a transmission line from Point Aconi to the Woodbine Power Station. The department of Natural Resources through the Crown Lands Act, is responsible for the administration of provincial Crown land, including submerged lands along the province's coast line. As part of the Nova Scotia Power Maritime Link project DNR has been responsible for:
- ensuring the province's interests in its Crown land are safe-guarded;
- a management agreement that sets out obligations for the three government parties (governments of Canada, NS and NL);
- ensuring the appropriate level of care and protection is taken by the proponents (Nova Scotia Power Inc., and Newfoundland and Labrador SPI and NALCOR) when they are installing and maintaining the undersea cable.
- limiting the risk and liability to governments of the lease.

Prosperous businesses of all sizes

Forest resources

Various factors have led to a significant reduction in the number of landowners who are actively participating in the forestry industry. The Department of Natural Resources has been meeting with various landowner and stakeholder groups across the province to discuss ways to involve private woodlot owners who may wish to become re-engaged in the forest sector. Through these discussions, the province is developing an approach that involves delivery of woodlot owner programs through service areas administered by woodlot owner groups. This program assists private woodlot owners who, through their activities, contribute to other forestry related businesses.

Geological resources

The mineral industry in NS has the highest paying jobs in the natural resource sector. New discoveries of mineral deposits leading to economic development opportunities and the creation of new jobs in rural NS are directly related to having an attractive and competitive business environment for industry. The mineral industry provides direct employment for approximately 2700 Nova Scotians and contributes about $420 million to the provincial GDP.[1] There is substantial potential for growth in the industry as new discoveries are made and brought into production. Initiated in 2012, the NS Mineral Incentive Program (MIP) administered by DNR provides financial support to prospectors and exploration companies to discover new mineral resources and increase the potential for economic development via new mining opportunities in Nova Scotia. The MIP is highly valued by industry and was oversubscribed in 2012-13 and 2013-14. The MIP includes funds toward the development of an on-line training course for prospectors.

Responsible fiscal management

DNR's multi-year Land Asset Management Technology Project was established to link land related data so that it can be used for land-use decision making and to generate more revenue for the province. The department has launched a new, internet-based application that allows staff to track and manage applications for use and development of Crown land. The Crown Land Information Network Computing (CrownLINC) system supports the work flow and management of business transactions handled by the Land Services Branch (i.e. non-forestry related transactions). CrownLINC is an example of excellent cross-government collaboration, with time and resources contributed by Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations (now Service Nova Scotia), the Office of the Chief Information Officer, and Aboriginal Affairs.

Accessible, responsive healthcare

The second-most leading cause of lung cancer after smoking, is prolonged exposure to radon gas in buildings, including homes. Radon is a colourless, odourless gas formed by the breakdown of radioactive elements including uranium and thorium. These elements occur naturally in rocks and soil throughout Nova Scotia; as these elements breakdown (i.e,, erode and decay) radon gas is produced. DNR used airborne geophysical surveys, bedrock and soil mapping, geochemical testing and direct measurement of radon in dwellings to model the potential for radon to be produced across Nova Scotia. Based on this information the department developed a radon risk

1 Economic Impact of the Mineral Industry in Nova Scotia, NSDNR Open File Report ME 2013-03, Gardiner Pinfold Consulting Inc.

assessment map that provides a general, provincial-scale assessment of the potential risk for elevated levels of radon to occur. DNR is working with NS Environment, Health and Wellness, and Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations (now Municipal Affairs) to promote the map and highlight the risks of radon to Nova Scotians. DNR will continue to refine its work on radon gas as it affects Nova Scotians.

4 Performance Measures

The approval and release of the Natural Resources Strategy in August 2011 has provided direction on several areas where it is important for the department to track and report on progress in meeting strategy commitments.

Outcome - Sustainable Natural Resources				
Measure	**Base Year**	**Target**	**Trends**	**Strategic Actions**
Innovation and change in the tenure of Crown land and resources.[2]		Target not yet determined. The significant outcome here is to show incremental change from the type and purpose of Crown leases and licences issued from pre and post Natural Resources Strategy approval. (August 2011).		Continue implementation of natural resources strategy.
Percentage of forested land harvested using clearcut harvest method	96% (2011)	No more than 50% of all harvests (2016)	2011 – 96% 2012 and on – data not yet available.	Implement new harvest tracking model.
Percentage of endangered and threatened species with recovery plans in place (as of March 31) [3]	74% (2006)	100% (2013)	2007 - 89% 2008 - 94% 2009 - 78% 2010 - 79% 2011 - 83% 2012 - 89%	Provide support and resources for the development of recovery plans. Work with partners on recovery plans.
Quality of geological databases as means for encouraging investment.[4]	89% (2011-12)	Minimum of 89% (2015-16)	89% (2011-12) 93% (2012-13) 88% (2013-14)	Continue to improve NovaROC on-line land registry and provide high quality, accessible geoscience information and expertise to industry

2 Demonstrating change from large industrial operation (eg mills) as component in transition of forestry sector. Change means:
- different types of lease and licence agreements (eg, shorter terms, multi-party, innovative terms and conditions)
- different purposes (eg, products extracted, produced, sold; recreational; complementary/concurrent and nested uses vs exclusive use)
- different rights holders being issued with leases and licences.

3 The *Endangered Species Act* requires that recovery plans must be in place one year after listing for endangered species and two years after listing for threatened species.

4 The data for this measure is taken from the Fraser Institute's annual survey of mining companies. The measure encompasses the quality and scale of maps, ease of access to information, etc

Outcome - Accessible Information				
Measure	**Base Year**	**Target**	**Trends**	**Strategic Actions**
Average number of days to complete renewal/re-issue of lease (from date of application to decision)[5]	For 10th year renewals: Avg = 1.1 yrs For 20 year re-issue of lease: Avg = 5.3 yrs	2 months (2017) 4 months (2017)		Implementation of new CrownLINC system, redesign of internal workflow processes, better monitoring of workflow and results, establishment of metrics

Outcome – Modern and Efficient Governance System				
Measure	**Base Year**	**Target**	**Trends**	**Strategic Actions**
Percentage of department Acts reviewed.	0% (2012)	50% (2020)		Review legislation to ensure that laws are clear and effective.

5 As a demonstration of improvements to the Crown land transaction work flow processes. At the 10 year point in a 20 year lease term, staff review the terms of the lease and renew for a further 10 years. At the end of the 20 year term, a lease is re-issued.

1 Budget Context

The following table provides budget information for the department.

Department of Natural Resources - Budget Context			
	2013-2014 Estimate	**2013-2014 Forecast**	**2014-15 Estimate**
Programs and Service Areas	*(Thousands)*	*(Thousands)*	*(Thousands)*
Senior Management	505	489	521
Corporate Services Unit[6]	4,286	3,988	3,938
Renewable Resources	18,678	19,272	20,363
Mineral Resources	4,479	4,507	4,607
Regional Services	48,429	48,264	50,680
Policy, Planning and Support Services	4,685	4,656	4,937
Land Services	4,010	3,896	4,196
Total: Gross Departmental Expenses	85,072	85,072	89,242
Additional Information:			
Ordinary Revenue	15,814	13,182	11,209
Fees and Other Charges	2,126	2,213	1,791
Ordinary Recoveries	130	2,869	399
TCA Purchase Requirements	6,900	6,900	4,400
Provincially Funded Staff (# of FTEs)	777	763	778

6 The Corporate Services Unit figures include the cost of financial and information technology services provided to a number of other departments and agencies.